

# *Seeking the Crowd*

translated from the Japanese by Belle Villar

## *Translator's Introduction*

“Gunshû no naka wo motomete aruku” (Seeking the Crowd) explores feelings of displacement and wanting to escape to a metropolis. During the time Hagiwara Sakutaro (1886-1942) was writing, Japan was progressing and having more modern cities. The poem envisions a metropolis that is crowded, full of life and a speaker who desires to be part of it. In a way, Sakutaro imagines this metropolis, so that he can escape his loneliness and feel alive, yet this is happening in his imagination. The speaker is only thinking of seeking the crowd, not actually pursuing it. Hagiwara uses the metaphors of crowds and shadows to embody the emotions of desire and longing, which I kept in my translation. Within this poem, there is the theme of disconnection, while attempting to connect. And just like Hagiwara, it is easy nowadays to feel the pressure of isolation under quarantine and to have a longing to go outside to connect with others. Simply put, through the medium of poetry Hagiwara was able to express his thoughts of loneliness. Therefore, the translation of his poem can bring to its readers a feeling of solidarity, that we are not alone. For this reason, we can escape by reading poetry and even momentarily feel connected.

## Seeking the Crowd

I always desire the city  
I desire to belong in the lively crowd of the city

Crowds are like a wave of vast emotion  
Crowds of people are yearning passion that is ever moving, ever inspiring  
Oh, somber twilight hour of spring  
Among the shadows between the skyscrapers and skyscrapers, I desire the  
movement of the lively city  
How fun it would be to be enveloped in the lively crowd  
Look, how the crowd flows  
Overlapping waves one on top of the other  
The waves make countless shadows that waver and spread

Among the shadows individual worries and sadness disappear  
Oh, how peaceful my mind is as I walk in this street  
Oh, these joyful shadows, loving and indifferent  
Swept away by the joyful waves, I am moved  
Dusk on a melancholy spring day  
The lively crowd swimming from building to building  
Where are they going, and why?  
Enfolding my overwhelming sorrows, one huge earthly shadow  
Oh, I desire to flow within the wave  
Wherever, Wherever  
The waves grow dim at the horizon  
All flowing in one, just one direction

## 群集の中を求めて歩く

私はいつも都會をもとめる  
都會のにぎやかな群集の中に居ることをもとめる

群集はおほきな感情をもつた浪のやうなものだ  
どこへでも流れてゆくひとつのさかんな意志と愛欲とのぐるうぷだ  
ああ ものがなしき春のたそがれどき  
都會の入り混みたる建築と建築との日影をもとめ  
おほきな群集の中にもまれてゆくのはどんなに楽しいことか  
みよこの群集のながれてゆくありさまを  
ひとつの浪はひとつの浪の上にかさなり  
浪はかざりなき日影をつくり 日影はゆるぎつつひろがりすすむ  
人のひとりひとりにもつ憂いと悲しみと みなその日影に消えてあと  
かたもない  
ああ なんといふやすらかな心で 私はこの道をも歩いて行くことか  
ああ このおほいなる愛と無心のたのしき日影  
たのしき浪のあなたにつれられて行く心もちは涙ぐましくなるやうだ。  
うらがなしい春の日のたそがれどき  
このひとびとの群は 建築と建築との軒をおよいで  
どこへどうしてながれ行かうとするのか  
私のかなしい憂鬱をつつんである ひとつのおほきな地上の日影  
ただよふ無心の浪のながれ  
ああ どこまでも どこまでも この群集の浪の中をもまれて行きたい  
浪の行方は地平にけむる  
ひとつの ただひとつの「方角」ばかりさしてながれ行かうよ。



*untitled*  
by Shenella Silva